

APPENDIX

From: [REDACTED]
Date: 12 February 2013 14:44:02 GMT
To: clerk@rydetowncouncil.gov.uk, rydetowncouncil01@btconnect.com
Subject: **Proposed sale of Ryde Harbour.**

From Cllr David Woodward, Ryde Town Council.

With reference to the proposed sale of Ryde Harbour, I would like to make the following observations/comments.

It is apparent that in the current economic climate, which has seemingly no end in sight for many years to come; the Harbour presents a major problem to the IWC, especially from the aspect of the major maintenance required every few years, ie dredging. This is not a natural harbour and it can only be maintained, even as a tidal harbour, by dredging every few years, a cost apparently now outside the capability or resource of this Local Authority.

Despite apparently having some 21.000 visitors per annum, it is running at a negative cost. I think it is a fair generalisation to say that Local Authorities in general are not particularly effective when it comes to running businesses. Running businesses is not really the prime function of Local Authorities and I make this observation as a general comment regarding any Local Authority, not as a particular criticism.

The structure and sea walls etc., in this area of the Esplanade and the Harbour is all in a good structural condition, as much of this area was constructed or rebuilt in fairly recent times. However it's somewhat let down by the Harbourmasters Office, which I assume started life as a container, and is a most unsatisfactory aspect in a Conservation Area. A future owner would, I am sure, definitely consider this aspect and would probably want to build something in keeping, perhaps incorporating a cafe or similar?

It seems logical to think that the future of this facility can be better assured if it were not in the hands of a Local Authority. Clearly covenants will be needed to ensure it remains a viable harbour, accessible to the public because it is also an important Visitor attraction. I also want to bring to attention, the problems connected to the Monkton Mead Brook. This drainage brook empties into the sea (or beach, depending on the state of the tide) nearby, via an outfall, fairly recently reconstructed in conjunction with a pumping station nearby of recent construction.

Despite these measures, without going into technical issues, the current system cannot cope and there have been instances as recently as the last few weeks when additional pumping has had to be brought on site to prevent flooding in Esplanade/Strand area. The situation will be massively worsened if the proposed PennyFeathers development goes ahead, because all the rainwater has to eventually come out of the aforementioned outfall.

It seems that the Environment Agency have established that for various technical reasons that I fully understand, that the situation with the outfall would be greatly improved if it could discharge into Ryde Harbour and I understand from anecdotal local evidence that this course of action may have been agreed, although no technical works have yet commenced.

However - and this is a big however, a prospective owner of the harbour may not agree to the discharge of surface water from the Monkton Mead Brook. into their harbour? It is an unfortunate fact that when the roads are washed down by rain; all sorts of horrid things go down the drains including dog excrement.

In conclusion, it is a matter of fact that Ryde Town Council have taken on and financed a number of areas previously undertaken by the Local Authority and whilst it is patently obvious that the matter of the Harbour is completely beyond the scope of the Town Council, the Local Authority must have clearly known about an approach by a prospective purchaser for quite some length of time and I find it extremely sad that the IWC have seen fit to advise RTC with a miniscule amount of notice, leaving the Town Council with absolutely no time to constructively and collectively consider and respond to the matter. This is disappointing and I sincerely hope a similar repetition will be avoided in the future.

My overall conclusion is as stated, that in this particular circumstance, the future of this facility is probably best assured in the hands of a commercial operator, but with guarantees that it will remain a useable harbour with public access and usage and serious consideration given to the Environment Agency and the Monkton Mead Brook outfall problem. The alternative is a silted up, unusable and ultimately abandoned facility.

Regards, David Woodward, Ryde Town Council.

11th February 2013

Reference: **The proposal that the Isle of Wight Council market the Ryde Harbour with the intention of selling off the facility.**

General comments:

The Isle of Wight Harbour has been consistently under developed/resourced. This potentially very attractive facility is now a deteriorating asset with a growing need for substantial investment. The Harbour lies within the conservation area in Ryde and this was the reason given for the IW Council's failure to be able to provide security gates for Harbour users. The Harbourmasters office is an eyesore which, if any other body had been responsible, would have long ago been removed as being out of keeping with the conservation area.

The Harbour provides an important point of interest for users of the esplanade as well as providing a much valued safe haven for small craft, most of which are owned by local residents. Additionally the Harbour provides a place for visiting craft to come and visit Ryde. The Harbour is a picture of colour at carnival and other festive times as visitors make a special point of coming to Ryde to take part in the celebrations and contribute to the local economy.

Risk:

There is a very real risk that, with the inability of the IW Council to fulfil it's obligations to the people of Ryde by investing in the maintenance and improvement of the Harbour that the facility will, in time, become derelict and close.

Potential:

The Harbour could benefit greatly from investment with the potential being for a restaurant of quality to be built (where the Harbour Masters office is). Such a facility would have outstanding views and be a further attraction for both the Harbour and the esplanade.

The role of the IW Council:

The IW Council should protect the interests of local people by placing a protective covenant on the Harbour to ensure that it continues to be an important local feature on the esplanade, a contributor to the local economy and a social and recreational small craft facility for local people and visitors alike.

The IW Council is now restricting it's vision and areas of activity to it's reducing statutory functions. It follows, therefore, that the only way of preserving and enhancing the Harbour in Ryde is for the IW Council to relinquish it's constraining control and allow private enterprise to take on the role.

The remaining question is 'what will be the relevance of the IW Council to the people of Ryde in five years time once locally owned assets have been disposed of and services are delivered through external providers'. Should we continue with such a very expensive and cumbersome mechanism given that all the key decisions are taken by less than a dozen people?

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